**Cyber-Bullying: Providing “Netiquette” Education in Schools, Will it Help Prevent Cyber-Bullying?**

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**Statement of the Problem**

There is a new form of school violence on the rise added to the traditional bullying; it is called cyber-bullying. Cyber-Bullying is a problem with school-aged children all around the world. Children are always connected or wired, and communicate in ways that are sometimes not supervised by adults. Therefore, it makes it difficult for parents and school administrators to understand the nature of the problem and do something about it.

**Review of Literature**

The home, neighborhood, and school play an important role in the social and physical development of children. Historically, bullying has been the common form of youthful violence (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). It affected children and teenagers only at school, traveling to or from school, or in public places such as the playgrounds, bus stops, and even in school buses (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). New and emerging technologies, however, has made it easier for bullying to occur beyond the school yard (Keith & Martin, 2005). Bullies can gain access to their victims and extend their aggression and threats by cyber-bullying (Keith & Martin, 2005).

There are many different cyber-bullying tools that bullies use to hurt others through power and control. Some of these tools are, Instant Messaging (IM), mobile phones, email messages, and social networking sites (Bhat, 2008). Cyber-bullies can use IM to forward IM’s to large numbers of people to share what one person might have told them in confidence. Cyber-bullies can use their mobile phones to send embarrassing pictures of someone to everyone, and send hurtful text messages to the victims (Bhat, 2008). Cyber-bullies can use email to also send verbal, audio, and visual materials to everyone about their victims (Bhat, 2008). Cyber-bullies can use social networking sites as well to pose threaten and hurtful messages about their victims (Bhat, 2008). The features of cyber-bulling that distinguish it from conventional bullying is that, it has a infinite audience, an inability of the cyber-bully to see the immediate reaction of the victim, therefore not knowing how much their behavior is affecting the other person (Bauman, 2010). And, there is also no limitation on the bullying beyond the school yard (Bauman, 2010).

Research has been conducted on cyber-bullying. In 2007, a study was conducted with 3,765 school-aged students in Canada (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). Studies found, 11% students indicated they had been electronically bullied, 7% indicated they were bullies/victims, and 45 indicated they had electronically bullied others (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). In 2010, a study was conducted with 2,186 diverse school-aged students in the United States (Cook, Daciuk, Gadalla, Mishna, & Solomon, 2010). Studies found, 49% students indicated they had been bullied online and 33.7% indicated they had bullied others online (Cook, Daciuk, Gadalla, Mishna, & Solomon, 2010). Between 2009 until 2010, the number of cyber-bullies and cyber-bully victims increased drastically.

According to Sabella (2009), students who engage in cyber-bullying are called “Social Climber Bullies”. Social climber bullies are upper class students who want to be a part of the “in-crowd” and are “wannabes” (Sabella, 2009). There are four categories of cyber-bullying: The vengeful angel, the power-hungry or revenge of the nerds, the mean girls, and the inadvertent cyber-bully or because I can (Sabella, 2009). The vengeful angel cyber-bullies do not associate themselves as bullies, rather they see themselves as protecting themselves and others from the bad people (Sabella, 2009). The power-hungry or revenge of the nerds cyber-bullies are those who bully others to show their authority, that they are powerful, and can make others do what they want (Sabella, 2009). The mean girls, who are females, bully others just for entertainment. The inadvertent cyber-bullies are those who respond back to those who have bullied them (Sabella, 2009).

A study was done by Patchin and Hinduja (2010) on the relationship between middle school students’ experience with cyber-bullying and their level of self-esteem. Studies find that there is in fact a link between victims of cyber-bullying and lower self-esteem (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Vygotsky’s Socialcultural theory implies that children construct knowledge in culture through social processes (Gauvain, 2008). Any form of bullying results from power differences between various social groups with different levels of power. Gender, race, ethnicity, or social class is usually the difference between groups (Gauvain, 2008).

There are many cases in which cyber-bullying has lead to fatal incidents, and schools, parents, and administrators do not know about it to help the victims before it is too late. In 2006, Alex Teka of New Zealand ended her life due to cyber-bullying. She was a victim and was sent abusive and threatening emails and text messages by her peers at school (Bhat, 2008). In 2008, Chantell of Brisbane was injured in a hit and run accident. She was a victim of cyber-bullying through instant messaging and cell phones, started by a former friend after a fight over a boy (Bhat, 2008). The cyber-bullying soon turned into this serious physical attack (Bhat, 2008). In 2003, Ryan Patrick Halligan took his life. He was a victim of cyber-bullying. Ryan faced rumors that he was gay (Bhat, 2008).

Why is cyber-bullying not being taken seriously? There on many views on cyber-bullying. Some say that cyber-bullying is worse than physical bullying, while others say that cyber-bullying is not worse than physical bullying. According to Meech (2009), cyber-bullying is worse than physical bullying because it subjects the victim to humiliation from a large audience and victims are not protected from cyber-bullying because it reaches into homes and into the technologies children use for communication (Meech, 2009). According to Amanda Lenhart (2009), cyber-bullying is not worse than physical bullying because traditional bullying is still more common than online harassment (Lenhart, 2009).

Despite these cases of cyber-bullying, the legal system does not know how to purse the blame when cyber-bullying occurs (Trager, 2009). Having the Tinker Standard applied to cyber-bullying is one way with punishing the bullies. The Tinker Standard offers an appropriate tool for schools to prohibit cyber-bullying (Lane, 2011). Schools are the best defense against the growing problem of cyber-bullying (Lane, 2011). Many strategies, intervention, and prevention tools have been given to help combat cyber-bullying. State lawmakers has notice the growing trends and statistics of cyber-bullying. They have begun to pass legislation to implement some of internet safety education in schools curriculum (Riedel, 2008).

One state, Virginia, passed a bill in 2006 that requires school districts to incorporate internet safety instruction into their entire curriculum (Riedel, 2008). Experts say that to combat cyber-bullying, schools should emphasize education of internet safety rather than criminalization of cyber-bullies (Meredith, 2010). Meaning, rather than focusing more on punishing the cyber-bullies, find other ways to prevent cyber-bullying altogether by teaching internet safety (Meredith, 2010). Author Peter Levy, discusses best practices to confront cyber-bullying. Assess cyber-bullying in your school, develop policies that address acts that could disrupt students’ learning or safety, provide staff training so they can learn how to address cyber-bully behavior and encourage positive behavior such as good citizenship, training on preventing and responding to cyber-bullying (Levy, 2011).

This article also empathizes on teaching students online “netiquette”, safe use of social media, and how to monitor their online reputation (Levy, 2011). To prevent cyber-bullying, educate students on how to avoid behavior that is socially inappropriate, educate students on what the consequences are if cyber-bullying is shown, and educate students on how to respond and report cyber-bullies (Hummell, 2007).

An article written by Beale & Hall (2007), explains recommended preventions and interventions for school administrators to follow in dealing with cyber-bullying issues. What school administrators can do is ensure that all students are provided an opportunity to attend school free from fear and intimidation (Beale & Hall, 2007). School administrators create a school climate in which students feel encouraged and comfortable reporting any and all forms of cyber-bullying to an adult (Beale & Hall, 2007). School administrators can provide parents with education and encourage parents to discuss internet bullying with their children (Beale & Hall, 2007).

Not only is school administrators responsible for preventing cyber-bullying, but parents are as well. Here is a list of recommendations to help parents in preventing or addressing cyber-bullying. Parents should talk to their child about cyber-bullying and let them know that cyber-bullying inflicts harm and causes pain in the real world as well as in cyberspace (Patchin & Hinduja, 2009). Parents should make sure that their child’s school has internet safety educational programming in place. Parents should educate their children about appropriate internet based behaviors (Patchin & Hinduja, 2009). Parents should model appropriate technology usage. Parents should monitor their child’s activities while they are online, informally or formally (Patchin & Hinduja, 2009).

There are different strategies to heal the mental anguish that is caused by cyber-bullying. Schools can offer emotional support to cyber-bullying victims (Froeschle, Mayorga, Castillo, & Hargrave, 2008). An article suggests that the way to offer that emotional support is to encourage cyber-bullying victims to participate in school groups and activities that build friendships and increase self-esteem, and assign older students to serve as mentors to victims (Froeschle, Mayorga, Castillo, & Hargrave, 2008). Schools should also be aware that victim’s fears may occur for years and should not dismiss their feelings (Froeschle, Mayorga, Castillo, & Hargrave, 2008).

One of the main possible preventions for cyber-bullying is teaching internet etiquette to students. Providing internet etiquette education in schools about how to use these new and emerging technologies in positive ways is a good way to prevent cyber-bullying (Pfister, 2011). Through internet etiquette education, students would be taught respectful approaches to technological communication and how to avoid being a victim of cyber-bullying (Pfister, 2011).

**Statement of the Hypothesis**

HR1: My Demonstration Method of teaching netiquette (Internet etiquette) over an eight week period, three times a week for forty-five minutes each during one period at PS XX in Brooklyn, NY will increase eighteen sixth grade students’ knowledge of appropriate use of new and emerging technologies.

HR2: My Demonstration Method of teaching netiquette (Internet etiquette) over an eight week period, three times a week for forty-five minutes each during one period at PS XX in Brooklyn, NY will decrease cyber-bullying.

**Participants**

There will be eighteen students in the sixth grade who will take part in this demonstration and instructional method of internet etiquette. The students will have been identified as having disruptive behaviors.

**Instruments**

There will be consent forms given to students’ parents, school principal, and teacher. Pre-survey will be given in regards to cyber-bullying, and assessment will be done after the students have been taught internet etiquette.

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**Appendices**

Dear Parents/Guardian,

My name is Sherryann G. Surin. I am currently a graduate student studying Childhood Education at Brooklyn College. This fall semester I am taking an Applied Theory/Research class and part of my coursework is to conduct an action research project in a classroom. The title of my action research project is “Cyber-Bullying: Providing “Netiquette” Education in Schools, Will it Help Prevent Cyber-Bullying? In order to do my action research project, I need to work with a few sixth grade students for an eight week period, three times a week for forty-five minutes each during one period. My goal is to help increase students’ knowledge of appropriate use of new and emerging technologies by teaching internet etiquette, to decrease cyber-bullying. To conduct this project, some data about the children will be collected. To collect this data, I will use surveys, and do assessments.

I am requesting your permission to use any data I have gathered in my research report. All participants in this action research project will remain anonymous, and any information collected about your child will remain confidential. Below, check off whether or not you allow your child to participate in this action research project. If you have any questions, please contact me at [shesuri85@aol.com](mailto:shesuri85@aol.com). Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Sherryann Surin

\_\_\_\_\_I allow my child to participate in your action research project.

\_\_\_\_\_I will not allow my child to participate in your action research project.

Dear Principal,

My name is Sherryann G. Surin. I am currently a graduate student studying Childhood Education at Brooklyn College. This fall semester I am taking an Applied Theory/Research class and part of my coursework is to conduct an action research project in a classroom. The title of my action research project is “Cyber-Bullying: Providing “Netiquette” Education in Schools, Will it Help Prevent Cyber-Bullying? In order to do my action research project, I need to work with a few sixth grade students for an eight week period, three times a week for forty-five minutes each during one period. My goal is to help increase students’ knowledge of appropriate use of new and emerging technologies by teaching internet etiquette, to decrease cyber-bullying. To conduct this project, some data about the children will be collected. To collect this data, I will use surveys, and do assessments.

I am requesting your permission to do my action research project in your school. All participants in this action research project will remain anonymous, and any information collected about the students in your school will remain confidential. Below, check off whether or not you allow me to do my action research project in your school. If you have any questions, please contact me at [shesuri85@aol.com](mailto:shesuri85@aol.com). Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Sherryann Surin

\_\_\_\_\_I allow Sherryann G. Surin to conduct her action research project in my school.

\_\_\_\_\_I do not allow Sherryann G. Surin to conduct her action research project in my school.

Dear Teacher,

My name is Sherryann G. Surin. I am currently a graduate student studying Childhood Education at Brooklyn College. This fall semester I am taking an Applied Theory/Research class and part of my coursework is to conduct an action research project in a classroom. The title of my action research project is “Cyber-Bullying: Providing “Netiquette” Education in Schools, Will it Help Prevent Cyber-Bullying? In order to do my action research project, I need to work with a few sixth grade students for an eight week period, three times a week for forty-five minutes each during one period. My goal is to help increase students’ knowledge of appropriate use of new and emerging technologies by teaching internet etiquette, to decrease cyber-bullying. To conduct this project, some data about the children will be collected. To collect this data, I will use surveys, and do assessments.

I am requesting your permission to do my action research project with your students in the classroom. I will make sure that this project will not interfere with your own classroom curriculum. All participants in this action research project will remain anonymous, and any information collected about your students will remain confidential. Below, check off whether or not you allow me to come in your classroom to conduct my action research project with your students. If you have any questions, please contact me at [shesuri85@aol.com](mailto:shesuri85@aol.com). Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Sherryann Surin

\_\_\_\_\_I allow Sherryann G. Surin to come in my classroom to conduct her action research project with my students.

\_\_\_\_\_I do not allow Sherryann G. Surin to come in my classroom to conduct her action research project with my students.